

# **King County 2003 Taxicab Annual Report**



**April 1, 2004**

This report is submitted in compliance with King County Code 6.64.740. It includes a brief history of taxicab regulations in King County and statistics regarding number of taxicabs and drivers, complaints, results of a survey of taxicab response times, changes in response times from previous reporting periods, relationship of actual response times to optimum average response times, and other information relating to the licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County.



King County

Department of Executive Services  
Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division

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## **King County Taxicab Annual Report for 2003**

### **Executive Summary**

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#### ***Introduction***

The 2003 annual taxicab report is submitted in compliance with King County Code 6.64.740. The report includes statistical information regarding taxicabs and drivers, complaints, taxicab service response times, survey results and other information relating to the licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County. The report also includes a brief historical look at taxicab regulations in King County.

#### ***Taxicab Regulations***

King County regulates the operation of taxicabs in the unincorporated area of King County and in several contract cities. Standard areas of regulation include rates, the fees taxis can charge their customers, the manner in which those fees are established, entry into the industry, and the requirements for obtaining a license.

After a 1979 experiment in deregulation of the taxi industry, the county chose to re-regulate both entry requirements and rates and has continued to do so since that time. In 1995, a major rewrite of the county's taxicab ordinance was undertaken. Taxicab rates were raised to their current level of \$1.80 - drop, and \$1.80 per mile. In addition to the rate increase, the ordinance continued closed entry, enhanced the vehicle safety and sanitation standards, and increased for-hire driver entry and licensing standards.

#### ***Taxicab Response Survey***

The County Code requires King County to establish a schedule of optimum times for responses to request for taxi service. Each year, the Licensing Section conducts an audit of taxicab company dispatch records to determine actual response times for service requests and compares those with the optimum response times. In 2003, the actual average service response times remained within the established optimum response times established in 1987.

#### ***For-Hire Drivers***

In 2003, the Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division processed a record number of for-hire driver applications—2,343 applications (an increase of approximately 4% each year since 2000). There

are approximately 2.6 for-hire drivers per licensed taxicab in Seattle and King County. A two-day training course, a 2 ½ hour written exam, physical exam, fingerprinting, and criminal background checks are just a few of the requirements for new applicants. The training includes defensive driving, personal safety, geography of the Puget Sound area (including map reading), county and city taxi rules and regulations, and customer service.

### ***City of Seattle Interlocal Service Agreement***

In 1995, King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement whereby the county issues all for-hire licenses and the city issues all taxicab vehicle licenses. This creates efficiencies for city and county regulators as well as the industry. An integral part of this agreement is the granting of authority for each respective jurisdiction to enforce the regulations of the other, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing field enforcement personnel. Additionally, nearly nineteen hundred applicants in 2003 were able to apply for both licenses at a single convenient location.

### ***Issues for 2004***

In 2003, King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle worked in collaboration on task forces and work groups to discuss the issues of accessible taxicabs, limousine licensing (currently a state function), and additional “regionalization” of taxicab and for-hire vehicle licensing and regulations. The Licensing Section will continue in 2004 to work with the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle on discussing ways to improve taxicab and for-hire vehicle services to all residents of and visitors to King County.

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## **King County Taxicab Annual Report for 2003**

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### **KING COUNTY TAXICAB HISTORY**

In 1976, King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle embarked on a program to regionalize taxicab regulations and licensing. This regionalization approach resulted in the development of consistent regulations and services across jurisdictions. The intent was to promote public safety and customer service by standardizing fees, regulations, enforcement, and rate review procedures, while maintaining adequate service levels throughout King County (King County Motion 2362).

Prior to 1979, King County regulated entry into the taxicab market, as well as rates charged to passengers. Entry was restricted by a population ratio formula and the King County Council set rates after reviewing prescribed criteria. Although some interjurisdictional cooperation existed in the enforcement arena, standardization of regulations between area jurisdictions (King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle) was minimal.

From 1976 to 1979, several measures were taken by the three jurisdictions to implement regionalization. The county and the city allowed reciprocal licensing for vehicles and drivers. The “need and necessity” provision for limiting entry was deleted resulting in an increased number of licensed taxicabs. The “need and necessity” provision required any new applicant for a taxicab license to show that there was a bona fide need for taxicab service. The Port terminated its exclusive contract for taxicab services at Sea-Tac Airport, and a growing number of independent taxicab operators obtained permits to service Sea-Tac Airport.

In 1979, the county and the city passed ordinances deregulating entry standards and rates (King County Ordinance No. 4232). There were no restrictions on numbers of licenses, and taxi owners could set their own rates. Deregulation resulted in peculiar problems in each jurisdiction. The Port, for example, found it had a surplus of taxicabs and a problem with some taxi drivers refusing to transport customers on short trips. The county and the city found that deregulated rates could result in severe abuses evidenced by one company filing a \$10 drop, \$50 per mile charge.

Each jurisdiction passed ordinances or implemented procedures to address these unique concerns. For instance, in response to rate-filing abuses, the county and the city created a median rate limitation. In response to the short-haul refusal problem, the Port created a special short-haul line where taxis volunteered to take short hauls.

From 1979 to 1984, the practice of deregulation was continued by the three jurisdictions. During this time, rates increased at a slower rate than the Consumer Price Index. However, the variance in rates created consumer confusion resulting in a consumer perception of price gouging. Cab conditions were also viewed as deteriorating.

In 1984, the county and the city passed ordinances to address the rate variation problem and to increase safety and improve cab conditions. The county returned to regulated entry by placing a moratorium on the issuance of new taxicab licenses and returned to setting taxi rates by ordinance. The city maintained open entry but limited rates by creating a taxi rate ceiling.

The county's entry moratorium expired in 1985, returning the county to open entry; however, rates continued to be set by ordinance. Also in 1985, the Port placed a moratorium on the issuance of permits to operate at Sea-Tac Airport.

In 1986, the county created the Ad Hoc Taxi Committee to study and recommend a method for determining the optimum number of taxis to operate in the county, the criteria and method for setting and/or changing taxicab rates, and a plan for developing reciprocity in enforcement and licensing of taxicab businesses. The result of the committee's work was Ordinance No. 7964 that created a process to establish rate and entry recommendations based on objective data rather than unsubstantiated industry requests. Revenue and expense data were gathered on a quarterly basis from each licensed taxicab owner. The first reporting period began July 1, 1988.

The revenue and expense data collected were averaged and applied to an equation that established an average net profit. The resulting figure was intended to assess general industry financial health and viability. When the figure was contrasted with optimum and actual service response times, it was intended to provide an informed view of the taxi industry (including service to the public) and to form a knowledge base from which appropriate legislative action could be proposed.

Data, which were collected from July 1988 through June 1992, were not used to make rate and entry recommendations. Application of the formula for each of the years that the data were collected resulted in a net profit ratio that, if applied as the ordinance suggested, would have resulted in a recommendation to decrease rates and/or increase the number of taxicabs. This recommendation was not made because the data reported by the industry were found to be, for the most part, incomplete and inaccurate, thereby skewing the results.

Ordinance No. 7964 also placed a moratorium on the issuance of new taxicab licenses. Since 1986, open entry existed for three brief periods, once during the verification process of a referendum which delayed the implementation of the moratorium for several weeks in 1987, again for several weeks in

early 1988, and for approximately one month in 1989. On June 10, 1991, the King County Council passed Ordinance No. 9986, permanently closing entry.

Additionally, on March 21, 1988, Ordinance No. 8450 was passed which authorized the County Executive to enter into an agreement with the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle to form a taxicab commission. The Regional Taxicab Commission was formed in September 1988. Its purpose was to recommend taxicab rates, entry restrictions, and other related revisions to the King County Code.

The commission submitted its work on entry recommendations in February 1990. The commission sunsetted on December 31, 1990, before final rate recommendations were submitted. Executive staff reviewed the commission's entry model recommendations in conjunction with the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle. In the fall of 1990, county and city staff jointly drafted an ordinance incorporating many of the Regional Taxicab Commission recommendations. Included were increased standards for licensing and operations of taxicab vehicles and for-hire drivers. The ordinance proposed closed entry and maintained a single ordained rate at an increase of approximately 8% from \$1.20 drop/\$1.40 mile, to \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile. The fixed rate proposed was the same as the highest rate the city allowed (ceiling rate). County Proposed Ordinance 90-948 and City Ordinance 108357 were submitted to the City and County Councils in November 1990. A joint hearing was held on January 14, 1991, and the city adopted the proposed ordinance. The City of Seattle, however, maintained its ceiling rate approach.

No immediate action was taken on the county's ordinance. In late 1991 and early 1992, a number of meetings were held with the taxicab industry to discuss the county's proposed ordinance. These meetings resulted in changes to the proposed ordinance, and in July 1992, a substitute version was submitted to the County Council. Ordinance 10498 was passed by the County Council on August 17, 1992, and became effective on September 6, 1992.

The County Executive's original rate submission in 1990 of \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile was increased in July 1992 to \$1.60 drop/\$1.60 mile. The industry heavily lobbied for a higher rate, and the County Council adopted its request of \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 mile/\$.50 per minute waiting time.

Ordinance 10498 included extensive changes in the for-hire vehicle/taxicab and for-hire driver standards and regulations. In addition to the rate increase, the ordinance continued closed entry, changed the quarterly data collection process to an annual filing, eliminated the mandated use of the resulting net profit ratio formula in rate and entry recommendations, enhanced the mechanical certification process for vehicles, enhanced the safety and cleanliness requirements for vehicles, increased the number of mandatory safety inspections, and increased for-hire driver standards for entry and denial of licenses. In addition, several provisions were included to address consumer protection issues.

In August 1995, King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement. The agreement grants authority for the county to issue City of Seattle for-hire driver's licenses as an agent for the city, and for the city to issue county taxicab vehicle licenses as an agent for the county. In addition, the agreement grants authority for county and city license inspectors to enforce both city and county taxi codes. This agreement created efficiencies for both the taxi industry and the regulatory agencies. Licensees can obtain both licenses at one convenient location. In 2003, nearly nineteen hundred licensees obtained the combined city/county license. This arrangement has benefited the county, especially in the area of increased enforcement actions and inspections.

In late 1996, the city proposed changes to its taxicab ordinance to make it more consistent with county regulations. However, the city went further in several areas. Most significant was the requirement that taxicabs belong to associations. The associations are separately licensed entities that maintain a level of liability for operations by vehicle owners and drivers. A monetary penalty schedule was established that set fines for violations by drivers, owners, and taxicab associations. At that time, vehicle age restrictions were also implemented. In 1997, all city drivers were required to retake the written examination, and all city drivers, new and renewals, were required to take an oral test to demonstrate English-language proficiency. These changes affected approximately 80% of county licensees since they hold both city and county licenses. The results of some of the city requirements are addressed later in this report.

In November 2000, the County Council passed Ordinance 13984 amending standards for the denial of a for-hire driver's license. The ordinance added mandatory denial language for applicants with bail forfeitures or convictions within five years of the date of application for vehicle assault, vehicular homicide or reckless driving. Additionally, the ordinance itemized a number of criminal offenses as set out in state law (RCW Title 9) as discretionary grounds for the denial of a license.

Beginning in the spring of 2001, King County, the Port of Seattle, and the City of Seattle formed a "Regionalization Workgroup" to study the feasibility of opening access at Sea-Tac Airport to all licensed taxicabs. The desire was to create efficiencies by reducing deadheading (taxicabs traveling empty back from the airport from trips originating in Seattle), reduce excess pollutants, and expand the number of taxicabs that operate across the entire region. Port Commissioners declined to open entry at Sea-Tac Airport and re-signed an exclusive operating agreement with STITA (Seattle-Tacoma International Taxi Association).

## ***Interlocal Agreements***

The county has interlocal service agreements with the Port of Seattle (which operates Sea-Tac Airport), the City of Seattle, and 13 additional cities in King County for taxicab licensing and enforcement services

In August 1995, King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement whereby the city performs all licensing functions pertaining to taxicab vehicles, and the county performs all licensing functions pertaining to for-hire drivers. The City of Seattle has continued to oversee the driver-training program. This arrangement has resulted in efficiencies for city and county regulators as well as the industry. An integral part of this agreement is the granting of authority for each respective jurisdiction to enforce the regulations of the other, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing field enforcement personnel. Additionally, nearly nineteen hundred applicants in 2003 were able to apply for both licenses at a single convenient location.

### **INTERLOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

City	Type of Service
Auburn	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Bellevue	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Burien	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Covington	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Enumclaw	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Federal Way	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kenmore	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kirkland	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Maple Valley	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Port of Seattle	Enforcement of County Taxi Code on Port Property
Redmond	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Sammamish	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
SeaTac	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Seattle	Licensing of City For-Hire Drivers and Enforcement of City Code
Shoreline	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code

## ***Time Response Survey***

King County Code 6.64.730 requires that a schedule of optimum average response times for requested taxicab service be established. This schedule, when compared to actual response times, is an indicator of taxicab industry performance and is intended to help determine the ideal number of taxicabs needed.

In developing the optimum average taxicab response times, King County was divided into eight zones (Attachment A). The zones are set out below:

### **TIME RESPONSE SURVEY ZONES**

<b>ZONES</b>	<b>SERVICE AREA</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
A	North City	Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, North County
B	Northeast County	Bothell, Woodinville, Fall City, Sammamish, Issaquah
C	Eastside	Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond
D <sup>1</sup>	South/Southwest County	White Center, Burien, Des Moines, West Kent, Airport (West of I-5)
E	North/Southeast County	Renton, Tukwila, May Creek, Newcastle, North Kent (East of I-5)
F	South County	Federal Way, Auburn, South Kent
G	Southeast County	Enumclaw, Black Diamond, Covington, Maple Valley
City	Seattle	All Seattle city limits

Actual response times, public comments from surveys on actual service provided, and prior history of complaints/comments regarding response times were reviewed. The schedule of optimum taxicab response times, established in 1987, is still in effect. A draft schedule of the optimum taxicab response times was posted on the Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division's Web site for public comment for a ten-day period (Attachment B). No public comments were received.

<sup>1</sup>Sea-Tac Airport is serviced by 166 permitted taxicabs. At any given time, there is a ready supply of taxicabs in the taxi queue. Therefore, the response time is 0. This response time is not averaged into Zone D which includes the airport area.

Actual response times were established by reviewing dispatch and trip sheet records maintained by North End, Farwest, and Yellow/Greytop taxicab companies, all of which service unincorporated King County. Response time was calculated as the time from the receipt of the public request for service to the time the driver picked up the passenger. The results (as set out below) show that the average actual taxicab response time was equal to or faster than the average optimum taxicab response time in all zones.

## TAXICAB RESPONSE TIME

Actual Average Response Time (minutes)														
Zone	Service Area	Optimum Average	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03
A	North City	15	15	12	14	13	15	13	16	14	13	13	15	15
B	NE County	20	16	18	19	18	20	19	15	15	18	14	16	18
C	Eastside	15	14	15	12	13	15	14	13	14	11	15	14	13
D	South/SW County	15	12	13	10	11	10	12	12	11	13	15	14	14
E	North/SE County	20	17	15	14	15	14	15	14	15	13	12	13	18
F	South County	20	16	16	16	17	16	18	17	16	14	17	16	18
G	Southeast County	30	19	22	21	21	22	23	22	23	27	29	28	30
City	Seattle	10	10	9	11	10	9	8	9	8	8	9	9	10

## Complaints

In June 1994, King County Licensing established a taxi complaint line, 206-296-TAXI, which is posted in all Seattle and King County taxicabs. Citizens can call the complaint line and select an option to file a complaint with King County or the City of Seattle depending on where the trip originated. King County Code 6.64.910 sets out a process for handling complaints. Once the complaint is received, the taxicab driver and/or owner is issued a written Notice of Complaint detailing the allegations. The driver and/or owner is required to respond in writing within ten working days with his or her explanation or clarification of the incident. Failure to respond constitutes a waiver of the driver/owner's right to contest the allegations and is *prima facie* evidence that the allegations are true. All statements are reviewed, information is collected and following the completion of the investigation, appropriate administrative action is taken. A finding is made as to the validity of the allegations in the complaint, and if substantiated, a Notice and Order is issued assessing civil penalties or other administrative action such as suspension or revocation of the for-hire license.

In 2003, only eight written complaints were received by King County and only three of those were in the county's jurisdiction. The majority of passenger complaints are received directly by the taxicab companies. Rather than contacting the county complaint line, customers are more likely to call the taxicab company dispatch number. The low volume of complaints received by the county is most likely

attributed to the fact that the taxicab companies and associations resolve the complaints before they escalate and are referred to King County.

Following is a table of complaints filed with King County since 1987. Complaints regarding driver conduct (rude behavior) and rate charged (suspected overcharge) are the most frequent complaints reported. Of the eight written complaints filed in 2003, three resulted in formal action, and five were referred to other jurisdictions (Kent, Issaquah and Seattle).

### **COMPLAINTS**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Short Haul Refusal</b>	<b>Wrong Rate Wrong Route</b>	<b>Conduct Cab Driver</b>	<b>Vehicle Condition</b>	<b>Service Response</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1987	1	7	3	1		12
1988		8	2	2		12
1989		7	5			12
1990	1	19	11		1	32
1991		5	1	1		7
1992	2	6	5	3	1	17
1993	1	10	2			13
1994	2	6	3	1		12
1995	1	3	6	1	1	12
1996	1	7	3		3	14
1997	1	7	14			22
1998	1	3	15		1	20
1999	1	10	9		1	21
2000	0	3	5	0	0	8
2001	1	6	8	0	0	15
2002	0	1	8	0	0	9
2003	0	3	4	1	0	8

### **DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAM**

In January 1995, the City of Seattle began offering an eight-hour driver training/education class, and in 1996, the training was expanded to two days (16 hours). All new applicants for county and/or city for-hire driver licenses are required to attend the two-day training class. In 2003, approximately 460 new applicants participated in the training program. The city continues to oversee the program and instruction is provided by industry representatives and county/city license inspectors. The training covers geography of the Puget Sound area (including map reading), county and city taxi rules and regulations, personal safety, ADA requirements, customer service, and includes a certified defensive driving course.

## **NUMBER AND OWNERSHIP OF TAXICABS**

The schedule below outlines the number of taxicabs licensed by King County from 1976 to the present.

<b>Licensed Year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Licensed Year</b>	<b>Total</b>
1976/1978	73	1987/1988	468
1978/1979*	402	1988/1989	603
1979/1980	426	1989/1990	599
1980/1981	474	1990/1991	561
1981/1982	436	1991/1992	551
1982/1983	552	1992/1993	541
1983/1984	648	1993/1994	518
1984/1985	567	1994/1995	504
1985/1986	562	1995/1997	503
1986/1987	581	1997/2004	502

\*Deregulation and reciprocity

Prior to 1977, a limit of one cab for each 4,400 people was in effect to restrict the number of licenses. In 1977/78, reciprocal licensing between Seattle and King County existed, thus the increase from 73 in 1976/1978 to 402 in 1978/79. Moratoriums were placed on the issuance of new licenses by the County Council in 1984, 1986, 1988, and 1989, with some periods where the moratorium lapsed and open entry resulted. For example, in late 1986, an advance notice that a moratorium could again be placed on the issuance of new cab licenses resulted in an increase in licenses from 562 to 581, most likely as a hedge against future unavailability of licenses and/or the potential value of existing licenses.

The decrease in licenses issued in the 1987/1988 license year was the result of Yellow Cab's splitting into separate county and city operations due to different rates prescribed by city and county ordinances. Approximately, 190 Yellow Cab's purchased city licenses only; 12 "Yellow Cabs of King County" renewed King County licenses only. When the moratorium lapsed December 31, 1988, approximately 130 Yellow Cabs filed for King County licenses, thus the increase from 1987/1988 to 1988/89.

The placement of moratoriums, the advent of closed entry effective June 1991, and specifically, exercising a 90-day null-and-void rule (60-day effective September 7, 1992) wherein a license in a suspended status for longer than 90/60 days is ruled abandoned, and must be surrendered, has resulted in a reduction of licenses. When closed entry was adopted in September 1992, the number of taxicab licenses was capped at 561.

King County Code 6.64.700 D required the County Executive to report to the County Council in 1994 on potential methods to reapportion/reassign lost licenses. Several options to address the reapportionment of lost licenses were presented to the council in 1994 with a recommendation to wait on making any decision until such time as the county and the City of Seattle negotiated an interlocal agreement for consolidation or sharing of taxicab licensing and enforcement. In late 1998 in conjunction with the 1999 budget development, a recommendation was made to the council to reapportion the 59 lost licenses. The recommendation included an eligibility restriction to owners/licensees of city-only taxicab licenses so as not to increase the number of taxicab vehicles regionally (Seattle/King County combined). Dual-licensed vehicles also allow for more efficient operations in that cabs do not deadhead back to the City when transporting passengers to destinations outside the city limits of Seattle. Since the number of eligible licensees exceeded the number of licenses that could be issued (59), a lottery system was proposed. This approach, as a budget initiative, was not adopted. Subsequently, various reapportionment options have been explored. The reapportionment issue was placed on hold while discussions with the city and the Port of Seattle were undertaken to study and recommend a regional license. As those discussions have recently ended, the reapportionment issue will be revisited.

*A breakdown of licenses by taxicab company or association is listed below:*

### LICENSED TAXICABS BY ASSOCIATION

	Independent (no association)	Farwest	Yellow/ Graytop	Northend	STITA	Orange	Other Associations	TOTAL
87/88 <sup>1</sup>	206	218	24	20	--	--	--	468
88/89 <sup>2</sup>	194	219	168	22	--	--	--	603
89/90	86	209	165	22	107	--	--	589
90/91	45	168	160	22	166	--	--	561
91/92	58	158	147	22	166	--	--	551
92/93	45	166	141	23	166	--	--	541
93/94	55	144	131	23	165	--	--	518
94/95	47	149	119	23	166	--	--	504
95/96	35	143	120	23	166	16	--	503
96/97	30	145	114	23	166	25	--	503
97/98	19	143	113	24	166	37	--	503
98/99	1	145	117	23	166	36	14	502
99/00	1	135	117	22	166	47	14	502
00/01	0	132	119	22	166	47	13	502
01/02	0	90	131	23	166	76	16	502
02/03	0	94	131	22	166	76	13	502
03/04	0	86	144	20	166	73	13	502

<sup>1</sup>Taxi licensing moratorium lapsed from 12/31/87 to 5/1/88.

<sup>2</sup>Taxi licensing moratorium lapsed from 1/1/89 to 1/31/89.

### RATES

The following schedule illustrates King County taxicab rates from 1974 to the present:

### RATES

YEAR	DROP	PER MILE	WAIT PER/MIN	EXTRAS
1974-76	.80	.60	.12	.20
1976-79	.90	.70	.12	--
1979-80 <sup>3</sup>	1.00	1.00	.30	.50
1981-84 <sup>3</sup>	1.00	1.20	.30	.50
1984-86	1.00	1.20	.30	.50 over 2
1987-92 <sup>4</sup>	1.20	1.40	.35	.50 over 2
1992-2003 <sup>5</sup>	1.80	1.80	.50	.50 over 2

<sup>3</sup> Rate not set by ordinance. The median rate is shown.

<sup>4</sup>Through September 6, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> In 2001, Seattle adopted a fixed rate of \$25 for trips originating from the downtown hotel district to Sea-Tac Airport.

**RATE COMPARISON WITH OTHER U.S. CITIES & COUNTIES**

<b>City or County / State</b>	<b>Date Increase</b>	<b>Drop</b>	<b>Per Mile</b>	<b>Per Hr.</b>	<b>Rate for 5-Mile Trip</b>	<b>Rate for 15-Mile Trip</b>
Atlanta, GE	Oct 2001	2.00	1.75	20.00	10.75	28.25
Albuquerque, NM	1998	2.20	2.00	24.00	12.20	32.50
Anaheim, CA	1995	2.30	2.102	24.00	12.00	33.00
Anchorage, AK	1997	2.00	2.00	18.00	12.00	32.00
Bellingham, WA	2002	1.80	2.00	20.00	11.80	31.80
Boise, ID	2003	2.20	1.90	30.00	11.50	30.50
Columbus, OH	Apr 2000	2.50	2.50	21.00	15.00	40.00
Dallas, TX	May 1991	1.50	1.20	15.00	7.50	19.50
Denver, CO	May 1991	1.40	1.60	22.00	9.40	25.40
Indianapolis, IN (varies by taxi company)	Jan 1995	1.40	2.00	25.00	11.40	31.40
<b>King County</b>	<b>July 1992</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>30.00</b>	<b>10.80</b>	<b>28.80</b>
Lansing, MI	Feb 1996	1.25	2.00	15.00	11.25	31.25
Las Vegas, NV	Mar 2000	2.20	1.60	21.00	10.20	26.20
Los Angeles, CA	July 2001	2.00	2.00	18.00	12.00	32.00
Madison, WI	May 2000	2.00	1.75	30.00	10.75	28.25
Oakland, CA	Oct 1997	2.50	1.40	18.00	9.50	23.50
Orlando, FL	June 2000	2.00	1.75	22.50	10.75	28.25
Portland, OR	June 1996	2.50	1.50	30.00	10.00	25.00
Sacramento, CA	Jan 1993	2.80	2.20	30.00	13.80	35.80
San Diego, CA	Mar 1999	1.80	1.90	15.00	11.30	30.30
San Francisco, CA	June 2000	2.50	2.00	24.00	12.50	32.50
San Jose, CA	Aug 1999	2.00	2.00	20.00	7.00	32.00
Seattle, WA	June 1996	1.80	1.80	30.00	10.80	28.80
Yakima, WA	Jan 1996	2.00	1.50	36.00	9.50	24.50

## **FOR-HIRE DRIVERS**

In October 1995, King County signed an interlocal service agreement with the City of Seattle to license all for-hire drivers. The city numbers, along with the results of the application process, are reported below. City of Seattle drivers may obtain either a county license endorsed for operating in the City of Seattle (proof of a city Business and Occupation license is required), or they can obtain a city-only for-hire license that allows them to pick up passengers only inside the city limits of Seattle. All for-hire driver applicants are required to take a written examination and attend a two-day training program. New applicants for a City of Seattle license are also required to take an oral test to demonstrate English proficiency and complete a one-week taxicab association training program. The number of for-hire driver licensees has steadily increased each year with an approximate 35% growth since 1997. The actual number of for-hire drivers operating at any given time is difficult to calculate since taxicab drivers operate on a full-time, part-time, and occasional basis. The median age for taxicab drivers is approximately 40 years of age (ranging from 21-74 years). The minimum age requirement for drivers is 21 years old. Approximately 80% of all for-hire drivers were born outside the United States and speak English as a second language.

## License Applications

### FOR-HIRE DRIVER APPLICANTS

License Type Processed			Denials/Revocations	
1992	County Only:	1,613	63	4%
1993	County Only:	1,160	44	3%
1994	County Only:	1,200	39	3%
1995	County Only:	983	36	
	County w/City Endorsement:	246	4	
	City Only:	<u>124<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>2</u>	
<b>Total:</b>		<b>1,353</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3%</b>
1996	County Only:	446	11	
	County w/City Endorsement:	818	30	
	City Only:	<u>601</u>	<u>33</u>	
<b>Total:</b>		<b>1,865</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>4%</b>
1997	County Only:	447	11	
	County w/City Endorsement:	965	25	
	City Only:	<u>189</u>	<u>7</u>	
<b>Total:</b>		<b>1,601</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3%</b>
1998	County Only:	555	9	
	County w/City Endorsement:	1244	25	
	City Only:	<u>54</u>	<u>4</u>	
<b>Total:</b>		<b>1,853</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2%</b>
1999	County Only:	517	6	
	County w/City Endorsement:	1408	29	
	City Only:	47	0	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,972</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2%</b>
2000	County Only:	486	5	
	County w/City Endorsement:	1572	19	
	City Only:	<u>37</u>	<u>2</u>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,095</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1%</b>
2001	County Only:	497	7	
	County w/City Endorsement:	1639	28	
<b>Total</b>	City Only:	<u>33</u>	<u>2</u>	
		<b>2,169</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> From October-December only

## ***Driver Interviews***

Driving records, obtained from the State of Washington Department of Licensing, are reviewed for both new drivers and drivers renewing licenses. Beginning in approximately 1990, Licensing staff began interviewing drivers with marginal driving records (i.e., with records that showed a pattern of an increased number of moving violations but not serious enough or numerous enough to substantiate an immediate denial). In 2003, approximately 77 drivers were interviewed and counseled regarding their driving records. In some cases, drivers are required to sign consent forms for review of their driving records on a quarterly basis. Drivers may be required to attend a defensive driving course (this is in addition to the four-hour defensive driving course all new drivers must attend). The interviews have been successful on two fronts. The driving records of most drivers that have been interviewed and counseled improve. For drivers who do not improve, the subsequent denial or revocation of their license has the added weight that the driver was informed of the consequence of continued unsafe driving.

## ***Written Examination***

On April 17, 1985, King County began testing for-hire drivers as a prerequisite for a license. The current examination, required by King County Code 6.64.580, tests applicant knowledge of the regulations for fare determination, driver-passenger relations, driver conduct, ability to understand oral and written directions in the English language, vehicle safety requirements, and a satisfactory geographical knowledge of King County and surrounding areas. The exam has 100 questions, 75 on geography, history and defensive driving and 25 on taxi regulations. Applicants must pass both sections of the written examination and obtain a passing score of 80% on both sections of the exam.

In 2003, King County administered 738 written taxi exams to 461 new applicants. In 1997, the City of Seattle restricted the number of times an applicant can take the written test to two attempts. In March 2002, King County adopted a similar rule. If a driver fails the exam, his or her license application is denied, and the driver must wait 60 days before he or she can reapply and take the exam again. Applicants for a county and/or city license do not receive a temporary license until they have passed the written examination. Over the years, the percentage of drivers failing the written examination the first time has increased from 25% in 1992 to 58% in 2003. This is due in part to a more comprehensive examination but also because of the increase in new drivers where English is a second language. Of those applicants who failed the written exam in 2003, approximately 47% failed the geography portion and 30% failed the ordinance knowledge; 23% failed both the geography and ordinance knowledge. After failing the first time, the majority of applicants pass the written exam after further study and re-examination.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATION RESULTS

	Tests Given	Passes	Fails	% Failed
1992	602	451	151	25%
1993	580	413	167	29%
1994	638	499	139	22%
1995	665	451	214	32%
1996	714	429	285	40%
1997 <sup>1</sup>	New: 453 Renew: 1,086 Total: 1,539	New: 208 Renew: 704 Total: 912	New: 245 Renew: 382 Total: 627	New: 55% Renew: 36%
1998	821	473	348	42%
1999	803	416	387	48%
2000	710	392	318	45%
2001	777	328	449	58%
2002	746	310	436	58%
2003	738	330	408	55%

<sup>1</sup> In 1997, the City required all drivers to retake the written examination.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

The King County Code provides several avenues for enforcement of violations of the taxicab regulations. These include Notice of Violations that are issued in the field upon observation of a violation, administrative Notice and Orders with a provision for an administrative appeal, and citations. Civil penalties can also be assessed via the Notice and Order process. Beginning in the fall of 1995, the City of Seattle, via an interlocal agreement, began adding King County Code violations when issuing Notices of Violations or Notice and Orders while conducting inspections of city/county dual-licensed taxicabs. This is reflected in the increase in enforcement actions taken since 1995.

In 2002, a field enforcement emphasis to encourage drivers to maintain accurate trip sheets was initiated. The trip sheet requirement is a basic operating requirement, and when attempting to collect data from the industry, drivers' failure to accurately complete trip sheets resulted in highly skewed statistics and incomplete data. The additional emphasis on field enforcement and trip sheet violations resulted in an increase in the number of Notice and Orders issued as well as civil penalties assessed. Since the administrative process of issuing civil penalties seems to be effective, the citation process is an available tool that is rarely used. This information is reflected in the following tables:

## TYPE OF ENFORCEMENT ACTION

	Notice of Violation	Citation
1992	33	2
1993	14	3
1994	22	2
1995	193	0
1996	269	0
1997	213	0
1998	154	0
1999	103	0
2000	119	0
2001	173	0
2002	199	0
2003	205	0

<sup>1</sup> City of Seattle began to issue Summary Suspensions to county-licensed taxicabs by the city.

<sup>2</sup> City of Seattle hired part-time taxi inspector exclusively for field inspections.

## NOTICE AND ORDERS

	Drivers		Owners		
	Denials	Other	Insurance	Other	TOTAL
1992	57	18	75	54	204
1993	40	28	14	25	107
1994	36	9	29	64	138
1995	39	7	0	0	46 <sup>1</sup>
1996	71 <sup>2</sup>	26	0	0	97
1997	37	25	21	1	84
1998	36	17	24	1	84
1999	28	12	11	10	61
2000	26	2	0 <sup>3</sup>	0	28
2001	37	0	0	0	37
2002	40	39	0	2	81
2003	25	16	0	0	41

<sup>1</sup>City of Seattle began licensing county vehicles, failing to maintain insurance handled in a different manner.

<sup>2</sup> County began licensing city drivers in 1996, thus the increase in driver denials.

<sup>3</sup>City implemented computerized tracking system to prevent lapses in insurance.

## CIVIL PENALTIES

	Driver: Assessed			Paid	Owner: Assessed			Paid
1992	17	\$960		\$810	17	\$735		\$735
1993	8	\$425		\$375	5	\$550		\$300
1994	9	\$500		\$500	2	\$321		\$321
1995	3	\$300		\$300	1	\$150		\$150
1996	4	\$300		\$300	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1997	5	\$475		\$175	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1998	4	\$200		\$200	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
1999	3	\$125		\$125	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2000	2	\$ 75		\$75	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2001	6	\$643		\$643	0	\$ 0		\$ 0
2002	37	\$1460		\$1460	2	\$120		\$120
2003	16	\$ 570		\$570	0	\$ 0		\$ 0

## APPEALED (King County Board of Appeals)

	DRIVER	Overruled	Upheld	OWNER	Overruled	Upheld
1992	12	2	10	2	1	1
1993	16	2	14	1	0	1
1994	9	1	8	16	1	15
1995	9	0	9	0	0	0
1996	28	4	24	0	0	0
1997	20	6	14	0	0	0
1998	5	0	5	0	0	0
1999	8	1	7	0	0	0
2000	8	0	8	0	0	0
2001	9	0	9	0	0	0
2002	12	1	11	0	0	0
2003	5	0	5	0	0	0

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

### ***Taxicab Trips***

Seattle-Tacoma International Taxicab Association, known as “STITA,” represents 166 county-only licensed taxicabs. STITA reported 530,905 outbound trips from Sea-Tac Airport in 2003. The number of trips increased 2.5% since the previous year, which represents a slight rebound after a 4.4% decrease in 2001, mostly attributed to the September 11, 2001 attacks and subsequent decrease in passenger airline travel. Over all, outbound trips have increased by nearly 55% since 1997. This increase is explained by growth in the tourism industry and business travelers. The City of Seattle requires taxicab associations to report service information for taxicabs operating within their association. The number of paid trips reported for 2003 was approximately 2.8 million, indicating a slight decrease from the 2.9 million paid trips in 2002. King County and Seattle taxicabs combined provided approximately 3.34 million taxi trips in King County in 2003.

### ***Taxicab Scrip***

Taxicab scrip is part of King County Metro's Accessible Services program. King County residents who have a reduced bus fare permit and have income at or below 70% of the state median income are eligible. Participants who register for the paratransit OPTIONS program have their choice of using limited paratransit van service weekdays to travel to and from the nearest Metro bus stop, if they live further than three blocks from regular Metro service, or subsidized taxi scrip with the cab company of their choice—or both if they desire. Registrants can purchase up to six books of scrip each month; scrip does not expire. Each booklet has ten dollars (\$10) in face value and contains coupons in fifty cent (\$.50) and one dollar (\$1) denominations. Registrants pay 50% of the face value, or \$5, per booklet. Currently, eleven taxicab companies participate in the taxicab scrip program. In 2003, Metro Taxi Scrip total sales were slightly down at \$744,428 from a total of 52,264 trips. Most trips are short and taken in the urban Seattle area where taxi service is more available and destinations are closer together.

### ***City of Seattle Ordinance***

In late 1996, the city adopted comprehensive amendments to its taxicab/for-hire vehicle regulations. The city adopted rate and entry standards, and for-hire driver and vehicle standards that paralleled the county's. However, the city adopted several new provisions that are different from the county's, specifically:

**Taxicab Associations:** All taxicabs must affiliate with a licensed taxicab association in order to operate in the City of Seattle. Associations must represent a minimum of fifteen taxicabs. Associations, in addition to drivers and owners, can receive penalty points for violations. Associations must provide one week of training for all new drivers to include three shifts on the road and instruction in geography. Complaint logs must be maintained and open for random audits. Associations must have their taxicab color scheme and driver uniforms approved by the city, maintain a regular business office during business hours, keep insurance records for vehicles in the association, collect and provide service information to the director annually, and notify the director when certain events occur; for example, accidents or arrests of owners/drivers.

**Vehicle Age Restrictions:** An eight-year age limit went into effect on August 31, 2002, which had been slowly phased in over the previous three years.

**Penalty Points:** The city sets out a specific monetary penalty schedule for violations. Each violation results in penalty points attributed to the taxicab association. For example, a third “Class B” violation (such as worn tires) would result in 10 penalty points assessed against the association. As soon as the association accumulates more than five penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, it must pay a penalty to the city of \$100 per affiliated taxicab; more than seven penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$150 per affiliated taxicab; more than 10 penalty points per taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$250 per affiliated taxicab. Associations, in addition to payment of penalty points, are jointly and severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver or taxicab affiliated with the association. Taxicab and for-hire vehicle owners are also jointly and severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver who commits a violation.

The City of Seattle reports improvements in the appearance and condition of taxicabs. The most dramatic examples are the reduction in the age of taxicabs and the decrease in non-compliance with vehicle safety standards. For example, the average age of vehicles used as taxicabs in 1995 was 10 years. During 1997, the City began a three-year phase-in of limiting the maximum vehicle age to eight years. As a result, many of the older vehicles have been replaced and the average vehicle age is now 6.5 years. Similarly, noncompliance with vehicle safety and equipment standards has declined sharply. During scheduled vehicle inspections in 1995, 71% of all taxicabs licensed by the City of Seattle were found to be in violation of one or more of the vehicle standards. That rate has declined considerably to 20%. This dramatic improvement is attributed to the reinspection fees and monetary penalties provided in the new taxi code.

The seriousness of violations has also been reduced. For instance, the number of Seattle taxicab licenses summarily suspended for vehicle standard safety violations declined from 410 in 1995 to only 80 in 2003. Part of the improvement is due to efforts by taxicab associations to pre-inspect vehicles in order

to avoid collecting penalty points. Also, drivers are now required to conduct safety checklist inspections of taxicabs prior to starting each shift.

On March 15, 2000, the city passed an ordinance amending its taxicab code. Among the amendments was a \$25 flat rate charged for all trips from the downtown hotel district to Sea-Tac International Airport. The flat rate is only charged on trips originating in the downtown area while meter rates apply on trips originating at the airport. The county has not received any complaints from the public or recommendations from the Port of Seattle to adopt a similar flat rate from Sea-Tac Airport to the downtown hotel district.

The city amended its taxicab rules on April 1, 2001. The principal changes included: definition of "operating a taxicab;" requirement for quarterly service information reports; requirement for monthly summary of vehicle collision reports; provision for monetary penalties for complaints about refusal of service to disabled persons or because of racial discrimination; requirements for evidence of vehicle insurance; and designation of non-smoking vehicles.

### ***Issues for 2004***

In June 2001, the county, lead by Metro's Accessible Services, joined a task force with representatives from the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and other stakeholders to address the issue of taxicab accessibility for citizens with wheelchairs and other mobility devices. In late 2003, Metro Accessible Services secured grant money from the state and began meeting with King County Licensing and City of Seattle representatives to develop implementation plans for licensing and placing into service wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. Changes in driver training requirements and operating standards in both city and county taxicab codes are required.

The Port of Seattle has continued to show interest in requiring limousine drivers operating at Sea-Tac Airport to obtain King County for-hire driver's licenses in an effort to increase public safety, provide better enforcement and improve service to the public. However, urgent issues arising at the Port of Seattle since September 11, 2001, have delayed progress on limousine and for-hire issues.

Updates to the existing code are being considered to address license fees, reapportionment, and bringing the code in line with the City of Seattle regulations.